

## AN ADDRESS TO THE WORKING CLASSES OF CANADA.

### BRETHREN:

The following statement is submitted to you by a body of fellow-labourers ;—men who, like yourselves, experience the trials and vicissitudes to which working men are liable ; men who, like all who obtain subsistence by the labour of their hands, consider that there are certain rights, as well as duties, pertaining to the workman ; men who, possessing no other capital than that with which Providence has blessed them—their labour—feel that it is with themselves alone to place a value upon that, the only commodity which they bring into the markets of the world, whilst at the same time they grant to those who desire to deal with them the right of declining to purchase if the article offered be rated at an extravagant price. The right of the owner to dispose of his property to the best advantage being established according to the usages of commerce, it necessarily follows that he is at liberty to refuse any lower rate than that which he has placed upon his articles, and can remove them to any other market that may be open to him.

The party desiring to purchase has the right, likewise, of refusing to give the rate demanded if it appear to him exorbitant. But he has no right to follow the seller to any other market, and desire intending purchasers not to buy on any

conditions, merely because the owner would not accept the offer he had made him.

The rights of both parties—the employer and the workman—having been thus defined, it might not be unprofitable to take a view of their duties. A working man should be honest and faithful, labouring during the time agreed upon, and performing a fair quota of labour in that time. The employer, on the other hand, should take no unfair advantage of the workman—he should avail himself of the best means, and supply the necessary material, to render the artizan comfortable, as well as profitable.

From these premisses the conclusion is inevitable—there are mutual rights, mutual duties, existing on the part of and between the employer and the journeyman; and such may not inappropriately be termed the ethics of trade and fair dealing.

Having given what appeared to the parties addressing you a fair exposition of the principles which should govern the employer and the employee, a statement of the difficulties that have recently occurred between some of the proprietors of Printing offices in Toronto and the Journeymen Printers will be laid before you; and it is the desire of those interested to state nothing that can be disputed, or that will bear the appearance of malice or ill-will towards any one.

In the year 1834 the first Society of the Journeymen Printers of Toronto was formed, and the wages were settled by agreement between the proprietors of Printing offices and the journeymen at £1 15s. per week of sixty hours, with 10d. per hour for all hours beyond that number. This rate was paid for the space of nearly nine years without complaint on the part of the employers, when (about 1843) Mr. PETER BROWN, father of GEORGE BROWN, Esq., now M. P. P. for Kent and proprietor of the *Globe* newspaper, made arrangements with the Free Church party to come from New York to Canada and publish a paper in their interest, to be called *The Banner*. At this time the price here (settled in 1836) of setting up a certain given

quantity of type was 1s. 3d. currency, while in New York it was 1s. 5d. Mr. Brown, however, who was about to become the champion of freedom in religious matters in Canada, and to facilitate the entire emancipation of the people from what he termed "priestly tyranny," made up his mind not to allow, if he could prevent it, any freedom whatever on the part of those who should work for him. As a first step, he proposed that those who worked in his liberal establishment should be paid 5s. per week less than those working in other Printing offices—the consequence of which was, that the men "conspired" (to use Mr. B's expression) against him, and quitted his employment. To supply their places, inducements of an advance in pay were held out to boys who were engaged as apprentices in other offices—but who were not indentured—to desert and join his office. Four lads from city, and two from country offices, were by this means allured from their legitimate masters, and led to enrol themselves under the *Banner* of Mr. Brown, so that he was enabled to continue the publication of his paper. But this did not last long. Mr. Brown's irregular and imprudent manner of conducting his business led to confusion in his Printing office, and occasioned much of the work to be performed after night—the boys getting home at one, two and three o'clock in the morning. They were soon laid up with sickness; and, to save their own lives, had to leave Mr. Brown to the mercy of the conspirators—the workmen.

The journeymen finding that Mr. B. was attempting to deprive them of a portion of their just dues, and that he was unscrupulous enough to stoop to any scheme that was at all likely to serve his unprincipled purpose, met together and decided upon making their situation known to the community. This they considered to be the more necessary as Mr. B. had denounced them as a rebellious and disaffected body. They therefore stated the matter in a short way, and published the following document:—

### "A PLAIN STATEMENT OF FACTS."

"The JOURNEYMEN PRINTERS of the City of Toronto, in consequence of recent proceedings in a certain quarter seriously affecting their interests, feel it their duty thus publicly to state the following facts and circumstances, in order to refute several misstatements, industriously circulated, calculated greatly to injure them. And while they disclaim all intention of assuming a position dictatorial to any Employer, they are resolved, firmly but respectfully, to maintain, by all legitimate means in their power, their just rights and privileges, as one of the most important and useful, though perhaps inadequately rewarded, class in the industrious community.

"For a number of years a certain "*Scale of Prices*" had prevailed in this City, which was considered perfectly fair and reasonable by all the employers—as evidenced in the fact that not the slightest objection to it was ever offered by any of them—and which continued in operation, *without exception*, until about two years ago, when a person from the neighbouring Republic commenced business here, who has ever since been unremitting in his "*liberal*" endeavours to *reduce as low as possible* the hitherto considered fair and equitable rate of remuneration due to the humble operative.

"The first effort of this "*patriotic*" individual, shortly after his arrival, in furtherance of his object, was to call together, by circular, the Master Printers of Toronto, for the professed purpose of *regulating* the wages of the Journeymen, when very few, or none, attended, and no steps were taken by them either to regulate or *reduce* the fair and long-established rate of wages. On the part of the Journeymen, it was thought prudent by them to re-organize their Society, the objects of which should be—  
"To promote, by every lawful means, the interests of the Employers and the Employed—to uphold the respectability of the Members of the Printing Profession in the City of Toronto—to preserve from encroachment the present established *Rate of Prices*—and to afford pecuniary assistance to those of the Profession who might require it." With these objects, together with the '*Scale of Prices*' subjoined, as set forth in their printed Constitution, the Journeymen are not aware that any objection was expressed by the Master Printers—on the contrary, by most they were cordially approved of.

"This individual, though foiled in his first attempt, did not relinquish his design, but has continually endeavoured, by various

means, to accomplish it. At present it may not be necessary to give a minute detail of the schemes resorted to: suffice it to say, that, after nearly filling his office with boys, (some two or three of whom were Apprentices who had absconded from Offices at a distance, and four who had left different Offices in the City)—about two months ago he discharged two of his journeymen, *professedly* because they were members of the Typographical Society, but *really* because they refused to work for less than the regular and established rate of wages.

"Having given these few plain and unvarnished facts, they leave a generous and discerning public to award their decision on the motives and conduct of the parties in question, trusting they will bear in mind that the Printers of Toronto are but acting on the defensive, and contending for no additional remuneration—nothing exorbitant or unreasonable—but on the contrary, are only endeavouring to maintain that which is considered by all respectable Proprietors as a fair and just reward for their labor and toil. 'The labourer is worthy of his hire.'"

"THE JOURNEYMEN PRINTERS OF TORONTO.

"Toronto, July 1845."

This was distributed throughout the City, and a copy sent to Mr. Brown. The public, always ready to sympathise with the working classes, felt that in this instance truth and justice were on the side of the workmen, and that their traducer had acted towards them in an exceedingly illiberal and oppressive manner. Action on the part of the working classes was aroused, and Mr. Brown was made to feel in his most sensitive spot (the pocket) that this was not the country for a malicious and bitter enemy of the working classes to look for a large subscription list to his newspaper. What was to be done? There was but one remedy, The mechanic had found friends in his adversity, and those friends were damaging the *Banner* to such an extent as to threaten a final folding up of the whole concern. In this emergency a stratagem was resorted to, and the issue was, that Mr. George Brown, the eldest son of Mr. Peter Brown, started a new paper, called the "*Globe*," which professed to be entirely independent of, and distinct from the unpopular *Banner*. Presently the *Banner* slept in its folds, and the field

was left entirely to the rising genius of the "Globe," who took pains not to come into collision with the operatives till he thought himself strong enough to crush them. Years has he waited for an opportunity. Time after time has he requested the proprietors of offices to meet and decide upon cutting down the labourer. Meetings have some of them held at his bidding—their flats have they sent forth; and, like the gnat on the ox's horn, they have not been felt.

But the world was progressing. California opened her golden veins—Australia held out the inducements of an extensive auriferous deposit, and Labour began to hope and arouse herself. Men's hands and time and worth were improved in value everywhere but in Canada. There a certain ancient institution—low wages—held away: the artisans departed from her shores, and sought in other climes that remuneration for their labor which was denied them in their own country. Provisions and all other necessities of life became dearer, and the working classes found it difficult to live. Again: railroads were put in course of construction; and so great became the demand for workmen that wages had to rise by the force of circumstances wherever railroads were in progress. But in the cities the impulse had not yet been given. A little time and common labourers—that hitherto neglected, but exceedingly useful class of men—were offered higher rates than the mechanics were then receiving. The impulse was *now* given, and it was felt. The stone-cutter, the carpenter, the mason and bricklayer, the tailor, the shoemaker, demanded a proportionate rise in their wages, and succeeded. Well did they deserve it, and long may they enjoy a fair remuneration for their toils.

The Printer—he who fans the flame of civilization and intelligence, and trims the lamp of liberty—began to look forth during the midnight hours of his toil in the debilitating Printing office, and resolved to demand a slight increase in his wages, so that he, too, might escape being reduced to a lower position than that he had previously occupied. An advance of 6s. per week



over his former rate was deemed reasonable, and he thought that his making it would cause no employer to raise any formidable objections. He was so far right, that all the respectable proprietors of Printing offices complied with his request, and in the absence of Mr. George Brown at Quebec, his brother Gordon—who had managed the affairs of the establishment up to this time—also complied with his demand. But Mr. George Brown now made his appearance upon the troubled stage; he determined to check this new conspiracy at once—the Printers must give in. He had been curbing, frustrating and obstructing the members of the House of Assembly while conducting the business of the country for months past, and it was not to be supposed that the Printers could or would resist him. The arrangement of Mr. Gordon Brown was annulled, and the men were notified that they would not be paid more than the old rate by Mr. George Brown, notwithstanding all the employers were then paying the additional five shillings per week. Finding that the men were not more disposed in 1853 to come to his conditions than they had been to his father's in 1845, he immediately flew round to some of the employers and requested them to assist in checking this insubordination; and having secured the co-operation of a few such men as himself, he called a meeting of the Master Printers. At this meeting a committee, consisting of Alderman Thompson, Mr. Jas. Lovell, and Mr. T. H. Bentley (*foreman of the Christian Guardian*), was appointed to draw up a scale of prices to be paid by the employers. This Committee having made out their scale, a general meeting of Master Printers was called to receive their report. Most of the proprietors of Printing offices attended this meeting—the Report and Tariff were submitted and adopted—and the Masters came to the conclusion to notify the men that they would not give more than the old rate after the ensuing Saturday. When Saturday night came, Mr. Brown—having expelled the men from his office on the previous Monday—was particularly delighted at the idea of all the Printers being turned adrift;

but he was doomed to disappointment. The proprietors of the *North American*, thinking they were bound to dismiss their men by the decision of the employers, and that all would do so, discharged theirs; but when, on Monday morning, they found out the fraudulent manner in which Mr. Brown had stated the matter, they requested the men to return to their work, and left Mr. B. alone in his glory. Lovell dismissed those who would not bend; while all the other proprietors, finding their workmen were not disposed to succumb, agreed to conform to the scale demanded.

George Brown, discovering that neither his threats nor his denunciations were heeded by the men, resolved to try his hand at the old family trade of *calumniating*. Falsehood and misrepresentation were evoked to his assistance, and the men were stigmatized in his paper as stubborn and disaffected, solely because they refused to labour for him for any doleful pittance he might choose to give them; and once more "the lying *Globe*" was an every-day expression. Forgetting that the men had the *right* to take their labour to the best markets open to them, he went round to the different Printing offices and requested that those who had been working for him might be refused employment should they apply for it! Verily the liberality of some liberals is pure despotism! The journeymen who had been in Mr. Brown's employ were glad of a holiday—the hereditary irregularity of the Brown family had deprived them for a long time of the repose nature required; and they proved as invulnerable to his abuse as did the walls of the Parliament House at Quebec. Mr. Brown published to the world the untruth that he got out his paper merely with the assistance of the boys of his establishment, and thus saved the wages he had been in the habit of giving the men. At the time he made this assertion he was paying some of the smaller offices in town to set up his type for him, and begging and borrowing whole columns of type from any of the newspaper proprietors who were simple enough to loan or give him. What high-toned morality! By way of still further damaging the



journeyman, he caused the city walls to be placarded late on Saturday night with hand-bills, to let the Christian community learn on *Sabbath* that George Brown, the Sabbath-keeping champion, wanted boys to work for him. Is this an evidence of his religion! We have seen him in two lights—as the moralist, and the religionist. As an abolitionist, none can be more loud than he: he can write, talk, aye, and even *feel* for the *BLACKS at a distance*, but would lash and drive *WHITE slaves at home*. Three lights, then, have we viewed him in. Behold him in a fourth—as a politician. Vain man! shallow performer on the political stage! He is *the* advocate of true and *popular* reforms and *liberal* measures. His last aim at reform was an attempt to curtail the wages of the mechanic, because a small portion would have been required out of his own purse—his last *liberal* measure was an attempt to oppress a large portion of the working classes—his latest *liberality* was exercised in a manner that would, if successful, have deprived his fellow-creatures of a portion of the necessities of life. Look at the following specimen of his political logic, and then you will be able to form an estimate of his tact and statesmanship. When speaking of the Journeymen Printers' Association recently, he made the remark—"I never will acknowledge, or have anything to do with, combinations of any kind—the *Browns* will never recognize combinations, no matter for what purpose they may have been formed." See the manner in which he has kept this determination—by originating and entering into a combination of the masters, with the view of cutting down the salaries of the men!

The numerous and unremitting attempts to infringe upon the rights of the journeymen is not the only injury they have to complain of on the part of Mr. Brown. He has neglected to perform certain of the *duties* of the employer towards the men. He has availed himself of everything that would tend to their prostration and detriment; for instance, *he has kept them idle during the day*, so that he might indulge in the satisfaction of

humiliating them by *compelling them to labour throughout the night*; and—oh what liberality!—while all the proprietors had their offices lighted up with gas, so that the men might have some chance of health and a little comfort during their labour, Mr. George Brown would not allow his workmen anything more luminous than a long-eights tallow candle to give them light during their nocturnal labours—thus securing economy where *his pecuniary interests* were likely to be affected at the expense of the sight and the health of those who earned his bread.

Under all these circumstances, we say then, George Brown may puff and blow, may threaten and *insinuate*—the Journey-men Printers, conscious that they have acted in a fair and honourable manner towards Mr. Brown and all other employers, feel that they are in a position to resist oppression and disregard menace.

WORKING MEN, OF WHATEVER CALLING! we have laid our statement before you—of truth it bears the impress. Again we appeal to you. Beware of the *Globe*—put no faith in its proprietor: the oppressor of the Journey-men Printers is the oppressor of the journeymen of every other trade. Is it necessary, then, to say that *GEORGE BROWN is the enemy of the working classes generally*.

FARMERS OF CANADA, AND MEN OF KENT! guard your liberties: you have the *right* to take your produce to the best market. George Brown, who has endeavoured to prevent the Printers taking their labour to any other market than his own liberal Printing office, would, had he the power, prevent you taking your grain to any other market than that he might choose to point out to you. The enemy of the mechanic is the enemy of the farmer. Wherever low prices for labour prevail, there must low prices for farmers' produce prevail likewise. The advocate for poor pay to the Printer is to the same extent the advocate of poor pay to the Farmer; and he who is illiberal to one portion of the working classes is illiberal to all—boast he never so much of his liberality.

WORKING CLASSES OF CANADA! lend us your sympathy, your aid. By your assistance formerly the *Brown "Banner"* was rent and riven; with your co-operation now, the *Globe* can be compelled either to enlarge in liberality or to collapse into nothingness.

With best wishes for the prosperity of all working people, the Farmer as well as the Mechanic—the Tradesman as well as the Labourer—we have the honour to subscribe ourselves

**THE JOURNEYMEN PRINTERS**  
**OF TORONTO.**

Toronto, July, 1853.

